

## Message Text

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21

ORIGIN IO-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ARA-06 EA-06 EUR-12 NEA-09 ISO-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 EB-07 CIEP-01

TRSE-00 STR-04 OMB-01 CEA-01 COME-00 XMB-02 FRB-03

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMCONSUL TORONTO

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USMISSION OECD PARIS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: UN, EGEN, (VAN LAETHEM, GABRIEL)

SUBJECT: VISIT OF UN UNDER SECRETARY-GENERAL GABRIEL

VAN LAETHEM

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ROME FOR FAO, VIENNA FOR UNIDO

1. ON THE OCCASION OF HIS FIRST VISIT TO WASHINGTON

SINCE TAKING OVER AS DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY-GENERAL OF

THE UNITED NATIONS FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS,  
VAN LAETHEM CALLED ON IO ASST SECRETARY BUFFUM, APRIL 17.  
VAN LAETHEM SAID HE WAS APPROACHING HIS NEW DUTIES WITH  
AN OPEN MIND AND WISHED TO COOPERATE WITH A WIDE SPECTRUM  
OF COUNTRIES, ESPECIALLY THE UNITED STATES FOR WHICH HE  
HAD SPECIAL REGARD BECAUSE HE HAD LIVED HERE FIVE YEARS  
AND SERVED IN THE AMERICAN FIFTH ARMY IN ITALY AS LIAISON  
OFFICER TO GENERAL CLARK.

2. VAN LAETHEM HAD JUST COME FROM PARIS WHERE HE  
ATTENDED THE OIL PRODUCER/CONSUMER PREPCOM AS UN OBSERVER.  
BEFORE THAT HE HAD ATTENDED MEETINGS OF THE ECA IN NAIROBI  
AND THE CNR IN TOKYO. HE COMMENTED THAT EVERYTHING IN  
THE UN HAD BECOME VERY POLITICIZED; THE NIEO IN PARTICULAR  
WAS SO POLITICALLY ENTANGLED, IT WAS DIFFICULT TO DETACH

THE ECONOMIC ISSUES FOR SERIOUS DISCUSSION.

3. BUFFUM AGREED WITH HIS ASSESSMENT. THE 6TH SPECIAL  
SESSION HAD ESCALATED ECONOMIC ISSUES BETWEEN DCS AND  
LDCS TO THE HIGHEST POLITICAL LEVEL BUT THE USG HAD NOT  
YET FULLY CAUGHT UP WITH THIS DEVELOPMENT. WE NEEDED  
TO ARTICULATE OUR POLICY ON THE GLOBAL LEVEL, PARTICULARLY  
FOR THE 7TH SPECIAL SESSION THIS FALL. HE REGRETTED THE  
GROWING TENDENCY OF THE LDCS TO FORMULATE THEIR ASPIRATI-  
ONS INTO HARD POLITICAL PRINCIPLES WITH THE CHARACTER  
OF INTERNATIONAL LAW TO BE OBSERVED BY ALL. THE LDC  
AUTOMATIC MAJORITY WAS BEING EXPLOITED IN VOTES ON SUCH  
DECLARATIONS OF PRINCIPLES WITHOUT BRINGING ALONG THE  
MAJOR TRADING COUNTRIES WHOSE COOPERATION WAS VITAL. THE  
LDCS MUST RECOGNIZE THEY CANNOT ENFORCE A REDISTRIBUTION  
OF RESOURCES BY SUCH MEASURES.

4. BUFFUM SAID AN EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGN WAS NEEDED BEFORE  
NEXT FALL TO UNDERLINE THE POINT THAT ALL COUNTRIES MUST  
HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS. WHILE THE  
STRONG LINE THE U.S. WAS TAKING INCURRED CERTAIN  
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POLITICAL LIABILITIES, IT WAS AN IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE  
THAT MUST BE ESTABLISHED FOR THE LONG RANGE VIABILITY  
OF THE UN THAT PROGRESS DOES NOT COME THROUGH RAMMING  
RESOLUTIONS THROUGH. THE CERDS WAS THE BEST EXAMPLE.  
WE HAD CONSIDERABLE WEO SUPPORT ON THAT, PARTICULARLY  
ON INDIVIDUAL ARTICLES, BUT WE WOULD HAVE WELCOMED MORE.  
WE WERE REVIEWING LDC CONCERNS AND WERE ENGAGING IN IN-  
TENSIVE WORK ON OUR POLICY POSITIONS AND CARRYING OUT  
A PROGRAM OF CONSULTATIONS WITH BOTH DCS AND LDCS IN  
THE HOPES OF PROMOTING A CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE.

5. BUFFUM NOTED THAT THE EFFORTS OF THE USG TO STRENGTHEN

THE UN WERE UNDERCUT BY THE INCREASING POLITICIZING OF ALL ISSUES. ISSUES SUCH AS ARAFAT, SOUTH AFRICA AND ISRAEL HAD CREATED CONSIDERABLY ANTIPATHY IN OUR CONGRESS TOWARD THE UNGA WHICH COLORED THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS MAKING IT MORE DIFFICULT TO GET THE APPROPRIATIONS WE WOULD WISH. WHILE WE RECOGNIZED THE LDCS WERE NOT MONOLITHIC, LEADERSHIP TENDED TO SHIFT FROM THE MORE MODERATE AND PRAGMATIC TO MILITANT DOCTRINAIRES, PARTICULARLY ALGERIA.

6. VAN LEATHEM AGREED THAT THE PARIS PREPCOM HAD DEMONSTRATED THAT THE ALGERIANS MAINTAINED THEIR ABILITY TO MOBILIZE THE LDCS. IN HIS MANY CONVERSATIONS WITH THE INDIAN DELEGATION IN PARIS, THEY WERE FRANK IN INDICATING THEIR UNHAPPINESS WITH THE ALGERIAN COSMIC PHILOSOPHICAL

D DOCTRINAIRE APPROACH TO ECONOMIC ISSUES, THEIR TACTICS, INTRANSIGENCE AND ESPECIALLY THEIR BAD MANNERS. IN THE END, HOWEVER, INDIA FOLLOWED THE ALGERIAN LEADERSHIP DOWN THE LINE. THE INDIANS INDICATED THAT IF THE ASIAN SUB-CONTINENT COULD BE THE BENEFICIARY OF SOME VAGUE INITIATIVE ON THE PART OF THE INDUSTRIAL COUNTRIES TO COVER THEIR FOOD REQUIREMENTS, PERHAPS SIMILAR TO THE LOME CONVENTION, THEY WOULD BE ABLE TO BREAK AWAY FROM OPEC/ALGERIAN DOMINATION; OTHERWISE THEY SAW NO ALTERNATIVE.

7. VAN LAETHEM SAID THAT THE FRANCOPHONE AFRICAN COUNTRIES HAD ALSO REACTED STRONGLY TO OPEC TACTICS  
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IN HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH THEM IN NAIROBI. OPEC AID HAD NOT COMPENSATED FOR THEIR BALANCE OF PAYMENTS LOSSES AND THEY WERE BEGINNING TO REALIZE THAT EVEN IF THE INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES WERE TO ACCEPT THE NIEO, THEY WOULD NOT HAVE THE MONEY TO PAY FOR IT BECAUSE OF THE CRUSHING OIL BURDEN ON THEIR OWN BALANCE OF PAYMENTS.

8. VAN LAETHEM BELIEVED THE NEW INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER WAS LESS DEMOCRATIC THAN THE FORMER ONE AND THAT THE NIEO WAS BEING MORALLY UNDERMINED BY THE MASSIVE TRANSFER OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO THE OPEC COUNTRIES FROM THE OTHER LDCS IN LARGE PART. EVEN THE ALGERIANS WERE HAVING INCREASING FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES AND THEY REALIZED THEY MUST USE THEIR LEVERAGE TO GET ALL THEY COULD NOW FOR IT WOULD NOT LAST FOR LONG. THE OPEC COUNTRIES WERE RELUCTANT TO INVEST IN AFRICA SO THEY CANNOT COMPENSATE FOR DECLINING WESTERN INVESTMENT AND THE AFRICANS WERE AWARE THAT THERE WAS A DANGER OF FOREIGN AID ACTUALLY DECLINING. VAN LAETHEM DID NOT

BELIEVE THAT THE LOME CONVENTION, WHICH HE CONSIDERS GENEROUS, WOULD HAVE BEEN SIGNED A YEAR FROM NOW BECAUSE OF THE WORSENING EUROPEAN ECONOMIC SITUATION.

9. VAN LAETHEM SUGGESTED THAT THE 6TH SPECIAL SESSION HAD ACCOMPLISHED SOME GOOD BECAUSE THE INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES NOW REALIZED BETTER WHAT MUST BE DONE. WE MIGHT TRY TO DIRECT THE ATTENTION OF RESPONSIBLE UN BODIES TOWARDS SOME OF THE HIGH PRIORITY ITEMS OF THE LDCS AND AWAY FROM GENERAL DECLARATIONS. IT WAS NECESSARY TO GET AWAY FROM THE TENDENCY TO APPROACH EVERYTHING FROM A GLOBAL VIEW RATHER THAN STAGE BY STAGE ON PRACTICAL ISSUES.

10. AN EXAMPLE WAS THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WHICH HE BELIEVED TO BE A GRANDIOSE PROJECT FAR REMOVED FROM PRACTICAL QUESTIONS OF THE TRANSFER OF APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY TO LDCS. WE SHOULD REDIRECT OUR THINKING TOWARD AN EFFORT TO SYSTEMIZE PRESENT INFORMATION ON HOW TECHNOLOGY HAD BEEN TRANSFERRED AND DISSEMINATED SUCCESSFULLY THROUGH ACTIVITIES LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
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OF THE TNCS, MULTILATERAL AND BILATERAL AID PROGRAMS AND EVEN FORMER COLONIAL REGIMES. (HE LATER CRITICIZED THE WORLD WATER CONFERENCE ON SIMILAR GROUNDS.) NEVERTHELESS, WE WOULD HAVE TO LIVE WITH THE NIEO FOR MANY YEARS TO COME WHETHER IT IS BASED ON A PHONEY CONSENSUS OR NOT.

11. VAN LAETHEM SAID THAT THE SECRETARIAT WAS OVERWHELMED BY SUCH GRANDIOSE PROJECTS WHICH TOOK MOST OF THE TIME OF ESA, LEAVING NEITHER TIME NOR PERSONNEL FOR WORK ON PRACTICAL MATTERS. IT MIGHT BE WORTH TRYING TO EDUCATE THE LDCS IN THE UN AWAY FROM VAGUE PRINCIPLES TOWARD THE REALITIES OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMICS. HE HAD BEEN IMPRESSED BY THE LOW LEVEL OF PREPARATION IN ECONOMICS OF THOSE WHO DISCUSS THEM IN THE UN. THE EDUCATION OF DIPLOMATS HAS NOT KEPT UP WITH THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF ECONOMICS. THE LEVEL OF PREPARATION HAS DECLINED DRASTICALLY IN THE UN FORA AS THE NUMBER OF SMALL COUNTRIES INCREASED. AT THE SAME TIME, THEIR AMBITIONS HAVE GROWN AS HAD PRESSURES ON THEM. THAT ACCOUNTED FOR THE EMPHASIS ON THE POLITICAL AND PROCEDURAL FOR THEY WANTED TO SAVE FACE AND DID NOT

WISH TO BE CONFUSED WITH THE FACTS. GRESHAM'S LAW ALSO WORKED AMONG DELEGATES THE BAD DRIVING OUT THE GOOD. EVEN MOST UN TECHNICAL MEETINGS WERE A WASTE OF TIME CONCENTRATING ON IRRELEVANT POLITICAL ISSUES. FIRST RATE DELEGATES REFUSED TO COME AND SENT LOW LEVEL REPRESENTA-

TIVES INSTEAD. IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO USE UN TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO EDUCATE YOUNG DIPLOMATS IN THE PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPMENT. BECAUSE OF THEIR LACK OF KNOWLEDGE, THERE WAS NO COMMON GROUND FOR FREE DISCUSSION.

12. BUFFUM SAID THAT THE U.S. REGARDED THE 7TH SPECIAL SESSION AS A TEST CASE FROM WHICH WE WOULD DRAW FUNDAMENTAL POLICY CONCLUSIONS. IT WAS OBVIOUSLY A WASTE OF TIME, ENERGY AND ATTENTION OF OFFICIALS TO GO THROUGH SUCH EXERCISES AS THE SIXTH SESSION. WE WERE TAKING A HARD LOOK TO SEE IF IT COULD BE JUSTIFIED.

13. VAN LAETHEM SAID SUCH ANTICS WERE ALSO HARD ON THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
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STAFF OF THE UN. AT THE LIMA UNIDO CONFERENCE, FOR

EXAMPLE, THE 500 PAGES OF DOCUMENTATION PREPARED WAS NOT EVEN LOOKED AT WHILE ALL ATTENTION WAS CONCENTRATED ON THE ALGERIAN RESOLUTIONS REHASHING THE NIEO. THE BEST PEOPLE IN THE SECRETARIAT TENDED TO LOSE THEIR DRIVE AND ENTHUSIASM. THAT WAS REFLECTED IN THE INCREASING DIFFICULTY IN RECRUITING YOUNG, AMBITIOUS TECHNICAL EXPERTS FOR THOSE WITH REAL EXPERTISE WERE INCREASINGLY FRUSTRATED.

14. IN CONTRAST ACCORDING TO VAN LAETHEM, THE TOKYO MEETING OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE HAD BEEN BASED ON FACTUAL PAPERS PRODUCED BY BAUM OF ESA AND HIS STAFF WHICH HAD NOT GIVEN RISE TO POLITICAL DISCUSSION. THEY WERE PRAISED BY ALL SIDES AND THE PROGRAM OF ACTION WAS PRACTICAL, BASED ON THE LIMITATIONS OF UN FACILITIES. THE ALGERIANS THOUGH PRESENT WERE QUIET. HE WAS USING THIS AS AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT ECONOMIC MEETINGS SHOULD BE. IN CLOSING, VAN LAETHEM SAID HE WAS NOT OPTIMISTIC AND THAT HE EXPECTED THE 7TH SPECIAL SESSION TO BE ANOTHER BAD MEETING.

15. COMMENT: THE SPARSE BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON VAN LAETHEM PROVED VERY MISLEADING. DURING HIS CONSULTATIONS, HE INVARIABLY IMPRESSED SENIOR OFFICIALS

AS A PERSON OF STATURE. HE APPEARED TO BE HIGHLY INTELLIGENT, REALISTIC, HARDHEADED, PRACTICAL AND FORCEFUL. HE IS VIRTUALLY BILINGUAL AND CAN EXPRESS HIMSELF WITH WIT AND CHARM IN COLLOQUIAL AMERICAN ENGLISH. HE WAS SHARPLY CRITICAL OF HIS PREDECESSOR DE SEYNES FOR BEING TOO THEORETICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL AND CONCENTRATING ENORMOUS TIME AND ENERGY ON A FEW SUBJECTS WHICH INTERESTED HIM, OPERATING AS A ONE-MAN BAND WHILE NEGLECTING ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT. FOR EXAMPLE, ALTHOUGH HE

HAS FIFTEEN DIRECTORS REPORTING TO HIM, HE FOUND HIS  
EXECUTIVE CABINET VIRTUALLY NONEXISTENT. HE HOPES TO  
CONCENTRATE ON MANAGEMENT AND IMPROVING THE COORDINATION  
OF THE QUASI-AUTONOMOUS BARONYS IN ESA. SOME OF HIS  
MORE SPECIFIC POLICY VIEWS WERE OUTLINED IN HIS CONVER-  
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SATION WITH A.I.D. ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR WEINTRAUB WHICH  
IS SUBJECT OF SEPTTEL. KISSINGER

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## Message Attributes

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